

Looking after your feet (1 of 4)

Facts

At least 15 percent of all people with Diabetes will eventually develop a foot ulcer, 6 out of 1,000 people will have an amputation. Doctors estimate the 3/4 of all amputations caused by neuropathy and poor circulation could have been prevented with careful foot care.

Some people with diabetes have problems with their feet. There are two types of problems that may develop.

1) Nerve Damage. This can happen to the legs and feet. Damaged nerves mean that you may not feel pain, hot and cold or pressure. You might let a cut on your foot get worse because you do not know it is there. This lack of feeling is called *Diabetic Neuropathy*.

2) Poor Blood Flow. This happens when not enough blood gets down to you feet and legs. Poor blood flow makes it hard for an infection to heal. This problem is called *Peripheral Vascular Disease*. Smoking when you have Diabetes makes blood flow problems much worse.

It is often due to Nerve Damage that a person with diabetes may not feel a small stone in their shoe, or a rough darn in their sock, which could cause a cut or a blister. Ill-fitting shoes can easily cause a blister. A person with normal feelings would feel this, stop walking and put a plaster on it. A person with *diabetic neuropathy* may not notice anything was wrong and carry on walking on it until they spotted the blood. By this time, the wound could be much more serious.



Keep healthy and active, remember it can be fun.

You may feel that the complications surrounding Diabetes sound rather frightening. To prevent foot problems from developing people with diabetes should follow certain guidelines for foot care.

Fortunately, you don't have to do anything out of the ordinary.

If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 374 208 email: palservice@salisbury.nhs.uk. You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

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Looking after your feet (2 of 4)

Check your feet every day

You could have a serious problem, even a broken bone and feel no pain from it. You must look for any break in the skin, however small. This includes cuts, sores, athletes foot, areas of redness and swelling. If you can't reach, use a mirror to check the under side of the foot.



Don't forget to look underneath your feet..

Don't be afraid to ask a family member or carer to check if you can't see.

Danger signs are areas of swelling, redness and heat coming from the skin. You may also feel unwell. If you find an area of broken skin, cover it immediately with a dry dressing. Seek help from your local Doctors surgery or your Podiatrist.

General Hygiene

Wash your feet every day using warm water and a plain bathroom soap. Make sure the water is not too hot by testing it with your elbow. Wash your feet with a cloth or sponge all around and in-between the toes. Don't soak your feet for long periods this just makes the skin soggy and more difficult to dry. Dry your feet gently and thoroughly between the toes. Don't ever use a heated appliance to dry your feet, i.e. hairdryer. Use a little talc if needed but don't plaster it on, too much can become clogged and the perfect place for germs to grow. (If you use talc make sure the old is washed away before applying more). Alternatively, it can be helpful to wipe surgical spirit in between the toes daily to prevent sweating and athletes' foot.

Nail Care

This needs to be attempted with great care, ensure a good light so that you can see what you are doing. Nail trimming after washing your feet makes it easier as your nails are softer. Cut your nails straight across and not into the corners, this will prevent in-growing nails (cutting a 'V' in the nail is an old fashioned idea and doesn't work). Always file your nails smooth using an emery board; this will stop them piercing your socks or tights. If you feel that your nails need clearing of dirt or debris, use the dry bristles of a toothbrush and brush from the base of the nail forward. If your nails are too thick to cut try filing them once a week, when the skin is dry.

Skin Care

Dry skin is a very common complication of diabetes. Using a moisturiser every day can help keep skin supple and prevent cracks from forming. Do not apply cream between the toes as this area is usually moist enough; a little surgical spirit can be wiped or sprayed as an antiperspirant. Any cream recommended can either be bought from the pharmacist or gained on prescription from your surgery.

Looking after your feet (3 of 4)

Self Treatment

Areas of dry skin can develop regardless of diabetes. Dry skin that forms around the heels can be filed regularly using a foot-file purchased from any pharmacist. Don't use the type that looks like a cheese grater. Use the file gently on dry skin, before bathing for maximum effect. Dry skin that forms around the ball of the foot and on the toes is a little more difficult to remove and will need the advice of a Podiatrist. Do not attempt any self-treatment using a scalpel or any corn/verruca preparations containing any acids.

Choosing socks and Hosiery

Always wear socks or tights that fit well and don't dig into the flesh around the ankle or the knee. You may turn socks or tights inside out to stop the seams rubbing the skin.

Guidelines for buying shoes

Even when you are an adult, your foot shape is still changing. Don't rely on the size that you have always been; ask the shop assistant to help and measure you. If you are going to a shop that doesn't measure adults' feet, then a simple idea is to draw around your bare foot on a plain piece of cardboard (such as from a cereal box) and cut it out. Take this piece of cardboard with you when you are shopping for shoes. Push the cardboard into shoes that you want to try on, if it slides in easily and sits flat, then go ahead. If you have to crease the cardboard to make it fit into the shoe, then move onto a bigger size or a different style.

Choose shoes that:

- 1) Are long enough and broad enough for your foot shape.
- 2) Have a deep and rounded toe area.
- 3) Are flat or low heeled.
- 4) Are fastened by a lace or a buckle or by velcro. This keeps the foot snug within the shoe. It stops you *walking out* of the shoe and also stops the foot *slipping forward* into the shoe crushing the toes.

Avoid shoes that have a plastic coating, e.g. patent leather, this stops the foot breathing within. Avoid shoes that have lots of stitching as this may protrude on the inside of the shoe and cause rubbing.

Examine the insides of your shoes daily for foreign objects, tears in the lining and ruffled inner-soles.



Could you feed this?
Remember with *Diabetic Neuropathy* you may not.

DON'T EVER GO BARE-FOOT.

DON'T WEAR OTHER PEOPLE'S FOOTWEAR.

Looking after your feet (4 of 4)

What is a Podiatrist?

A Podiatrist is a foot specialist. It is the new term for a Chiropodist. A Podiatrist has undertaken training for three years to become registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC).

Anyone who uses the protected titles 'chiropodist' and 'podiatrist' must be registered with the HPC.

Your Foot Health Check

This should be done by someone from your surgery as part of your annual diabetes review every year. The foot examination will consist of checking your circulation and your nerve sensations, as well as looking at your foot shape. If they find something that they are not sure of, or if you need further advice, they will refer you to the Podiatry Department. This does not mean that there is anything drastically wrong but you may need additional checks, treatment or advice.

It is up to you to tell your doctor or nurse if your feet begin to feel tingly, pins and needles or numb.

Remember to keep your appointments and we will explain what is happening every step of the way!

Useful Contacts

Diabetes UK.
10 Parkway
London NW1 7AA.
Tel: 020 7424 1030
Text Phone: 020 7424 1031

Diabetes Specialist Nurses
24hr answerphone
Tel: 01722 425176
Fax: 01722 425143

Podiatry Department.
C/o Central Health Clinic
Tel No: 01722 422257

Websites: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
www.diabetesuk.co.uk

Your Named Contact is:

Cream recommended for you is:

Podiatry Department
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